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Teaching Units in American Literature

A Report of the Curriculum Committee of the I. A. T. E.

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English held in Urbana on October 30, 1948, the Curriculum Committee asked teachers to submit to the Committee copies of units which they had planned and which they had found effective in stimulating growth of students in American ideals. The response has been gratifying to the Curriculum Committee, and it wishes to pass on to the readers of the *Bulletin* this group of reports of units which have come out of English classrooms in Illinois. In doing this, the Committee is mindful of the splendid cooperation which the authors of these reports have shown.

It will be encouraging to teachers of American literature and of other phases of English to hear that the experimental teaching projects are well under way and that reports from the teachers cooperating in this phase of the curriculum study will appear in a later issue of the *Bulletin*.

LIESETTE J. MCHARRY
Chairman

A Series of American Cultural Units

By CATHERINE E. COLLINS
Virginia Community High School

I

The Richness of American Culture

- I. The class studies the map, "America, A Nation of One People from Many Cultures," published by the Council against Intolerance in America.
- II. Each student
 - A. Chooses a name from the people listed there according to the fields of their contributions.
 - B. Prepares a report on this person so that the entire class may be acquainted with all the names and with the contributions and racial or national heritages they represent.
- III. The class chooses from the list the names of a few to whom they wish to write letters
 - A. Explaining the class project.
 - B. Expressing their appreciation for that individual's contribution to our culture.
 - C. Asking for an autographed picture, personal message, or biographical notes for the class library.
- IV. The class chooses a committee to write the letter, to which the entire class contributes ideas.
- V. The class mounts, for immediate display and for later filing, the material received in return, including letters, pictures, separate autographs, pamphlets, and typed articles. Gift books are also exhibited.
- VI. The class chooses a committee to prepare a downtown window display of the map and of this material, making its meaning clear by means of posters which point out
 - A. The history of the project, with the map and a copy of the letter.
 - B. The contributions to the arts and sciences made by each individual.
 - C. The individual's ancestry.
 - D. Our indebtedness to many cultures for the America of today and its accomplishments.

II

A Panel for Negro Education Week

- I. Students collect reference books on intercultural material, as Adamic's *From Many Lands* and *Nation of Nations*,

Stegner's *One Nation*, DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk*, Johnson's *Negro in American Civilization*, Redding's *No Day of Triumph*, McWilliams's *Brothers under the Skin*, issues of *Common Ground* magazine, Holt's *George Washington Carver*, *This Way to Unity*, Washington's *Up from Slavery*, and current magazines and newspapers.

- II. Students read widely, getting material on the Negro's early arrival in this country, the development of his arts, his early contributions, and his present-day leadership.
- III. Students reduce, into topics worded very briefly, the Negro's history in America.
- IV. These topics, together with pictures and clippings, are made into a panel on wallpaper, and cover the following:
 - A. Early introduction of slavery nearly 100 years before Jamestown.
 - B. Colonists' voluntary entry for freedom vs. Negroes' forced entry into enslavement.
 - C. Our injustice to the Negroes.
 - D. Their transformation of the Southern wilderness into rich plantations.
 - E. Art forms resulting from their subjugation.
 - F. Their contributions
 1. To literature—Wheatley, Dunbar, Harris, Hughes, Cullen, Johnson
 2. To music—spirituals, jazz, Anderson, Robeson, Hayes, Burleigh
 3. To science—Carver, Williams, Blair
 4. To education—Washington, Dubois
 5. To stage, screen, and radio—McDaniel, Waters, Horne, Scott, Ellington, Calloway
 6. To athletics—Johnson, Louis, Tolan, Owens
 7. To business—Wright, Randolph, Hudson
 8. To military science—Attucks, Davis and son, Thomas, Miller

III

The Meaning of Democracy

Purposes: To see what ideas of democracy are reflected in political documents and speeches; and to gain a view of America in the making as there reflected.

- I. Class collects, for a classroom library, material from literature and history books, from magazines, and from newspapers on

Mayflower Compact, Founding Fathers, Declaration of

Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, Monroe Doctrine, party platforms, political speeches, declarations of war, peace treaties, inaugural speeches, Atlantic Charter, United Nations Charter.

- II. Students divide into groups of two or three or four, depending on their choice of one of the above topics.
- III. Each group
 - A. Reads everything available on its topic, including history, background, and text.
 - B. Takes notes on background and on democratic views reflected in text, and keeps bibliography.
 - C. Converts into brief phrases in everyday words the exact democratic provisions in the selection; (Note: Here the struggle begins.)
 - D. Makes posters presenting these topics, which should show how provisions in each consider the welfare of the American or world citizen.
 - E. Arranges posters chronologically to show how ideas of democracy have kept step with the times.
 - F. Presents its posters through display and through oral summary.
- IV. Entire class
 - A. Takes notes on public welfare and democracy reflected in material.
 - B. Summarizes story of democracy resulting from notes.

(Among other things, I feel this unit accomplished a little in the way of certain composition goals: parallel construction; coherence; topic, transitional, and summary sentences.)

IV

Democracy in the Making as Reflected in Magazine Articles

- I. Class builds up collection of magazines by contributing to that fund instead of buying workbooks.
- II. Class discusses ways of furthering democracy today in America
 - A. Child labor laws
 - B. Better educational standards
 - C. Civil Rights program
 - D. Popular vs. electoral vote in presidential elections
 - E. Social Security program
 - F. Conservation program
 - G. Better housing
 - H. Better health care

- III. During free reading periods, each student reads articles on these subjects, making annotated card for each article with
 - A. Name and issue of magazine
 - B. Name of article, author, and page numbers
 - C. Brief notes on contents
- IV. Class builds up bibliography on 3 x 5 cards under above headings.
- V. Class plans panel discussions, news broadcasts, or quiz program on material all should know.

V

American Leaders in Time of Crisis

- I. Class discusses time of crisis in American history.
- II. Using American history and American literature books, class skims material and lists political leaders, speakers, essayists, poets, and novelists who have influenced American thinking during times of crisis, such as
 - Paine, Washington, Jefferson, Henry, Franklin, Webster, Lincoln, Stowe, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, Whitman, Wilson, Roosevelt.
- III. Class divides into groups according to the name or names chosen. Each group reads the appropriate selections and their background, selecting the speaker's or writer's principles or ideas and showing how they reflect American philosophy.
- IV. Each pupil reports his conclusions to his group.
- V. Each group plans a method of reporting its conclusions to the class, as by panel discussions, skits, mimeographed summaries, posters, limericks.

VI

Individual and Family Traits Reflecting American Ideals

- I. The class discusses and lists traits which Americans consider desirable in
 - A. The individual, such as
 - honesty, bravery, sportsmanship, generosity, interest in the welfare of all groups, patriotism, ambition, industry, faith, self-confidence, patience, sense of humor, cooperation.
 - B. Family life, such as
 - happy home life, love of children, love of parents, respect for authority, strength of family ties, sharing of responsibility, companionship.
- II. Class assembles poems, short stories, essays, plays by American authors.

- III. Class reads widely, each student keeping dated and annotated reading list indicating traits reflected in selection, as well as notes on type of literature.
- IV. Class compiles reading list for family traits and one for individual character traits.
- V. Each student brings to an elected or a volunteer committee newspaper clippings of incidents reflecting character traits admired by the American press. These are entered in an indexed scrapbook.

Prejudices and Race Problems

By PHYLLIS HOOD

East Richland High School, Olney

This unit on prejudices and race problems was an outgrowth of the study of several short stories stressing better understanding of people of other races.

Following the study of the stories, the class was divided into groups, each group making a study of one race represented in the United States. From the list of suggested activities listed below, each group selected two problems. Reports on their findings were presented to the class in the form of panel discussions.

Material loaned by the Illinois State Library was supplemented by clippings and articles brought by students. The difficulty in this project seemed to be to find suitable and sufficient material.

Our Aims and Purposes

1. To discover what our prejudices are.
2. To try to understand the origin of these prejudices.
3. To determine whether these prejudices are harmful.
4. To study the problems arising from these prejudices.
5. To determine ways of overcoming prejudices.

Suggested Activities

1. Discover similarities and differences in races.
2. Correspond with foreign students.
3. Make a study of famous persons among various races.
4. Determine whether there is any correlation between race and superior or inferior intelligence.
5. Collect information on the ancestry of each student in the class.
6. Collect newspaper and magazine articles which reveal prejudice. Discuss in class the reason for the prejudice. Who is responsible for the article?

7. Discuss movies that portray racial, national, or religious groups as inferior persons.
8. Draw a series of cartoons representing examples of prejudice.
9. Make a survey of graphs showing the difference in educational and economic opportunities for negroes and whites in the South. See *Survey Graphic*, November: '42.
10. Collect material on these organizations:
 - a. Ku Klux Klan
 - b. Know Nothing Movement
 - c. American Protective Association
 - d. Black Legion
11. Collect material from foreign born people you know.
 - a. How friendly or unfriendly were people in the United States?
 - b. Has the attitude changed?
 - c. Relate any experiences connected with the above.
12. Report on the effects of prejudice on any one group: Negroes, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans. See the book, *Brothers Under the Skin*.
13. Collect material on race riots and their causes. See *Reader's Guide*.
14. List the reasons for anti-Jewish feeling in the United States.
15. Invite guest speakers who are of another race. If this person is an expert in some field, ask him to speak on his work.
16. Prepare a bibliography of books dealing with race problems.
17. Study laws that seek to prevent discrimination against racial or minority groups.
 - a. Has our state a Civil Rights Bill?
 - b. If not, try to borrow one from another state.
 - c. If this state has none, why does it not?
 - d. Anti-Lynching Bill.
 - e. Anti-Poll-Tax Bill.
 - f. Find how your representative voted on these bills. Note: See *Reader's Guide*.
 - g. Read the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. Select sections that express democratic principles of equal rights for all men. Note any references to discrimination against racial or religious groups. Make posters to illustrate ideas.
 - h. Read Amendments 13, 14, 15 (Constitution) relating to freedom of slaves. In what ways have these rights been violated? How has the Fourteenth Amendment been misinterpreted?

18. Do you approve of the present governmental policy toward the Japanese in this country? Why is there not the same policy for people of the Japanese parentage as there is for people of German parentage?
19. In what ways do other countries handle race problems? Ask the students to whom you are writing.
20. Study the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter.
21. Have a committee prepare a set of standards for democratic procedure in the classroom.

A Unit in Colonial Literature

By LOIS M. HYDE
Catlin Township High School

The most difficult unit in American literature, for me at least, has always been the colonial period. Modern young people apparently can find little to challenge them in the stern, sober writings of the day. Since I attempt to build the course around a central theme which I call the American spirit, I find it necessary to use the chronological approach. As a result the class is catapulted into a period which, politically, spiritually, and perhaps morally, is almost completely foreign to their own. It is this introductory unit that I have labored over for many years. At last I feel that we have one which sets the class to thinking about the American way.

The intent of the whole course is to read as much of the writing of the period as possible, tying it together with historical background through class discussion. Always it is done with the avowed purpose of bringing to the forefront of the student's thinking those qualities definitely American: namely, independence of thought, self-reliance, and character. The individual Puritan or Cavalier is always more important than the group. Sarah Kemble Knight and Cotton Mather are human beings first and colonists next.

At the beginning of the term the unit outline below is presented to the class with the aim of the entire course and the titles of the two succeeding units stated at the beginning.

The American Spirit

AIM: To determine and to develop an appreciation for the guiding spirit which shaped the American nation.

Unit I. A Nation Is Born.

Unit II. A Nation Grows.

Unit III. A Nation Takes Its Place in the World.

UNIT I. A NATION IS BORN

AIM: To show how the American colonies, rising from an old-world culture, through will-power, determination, and devotion to ideals, laid the foundation for the United States of today.

PROCEDURE: Through reading the writings of the day, supplemented by secondary sources, we shall try to trace the growth of that indomitable spirit which has given the world a new people and a new government.

- I. Building a new home.
 - A. Establishing Jamestown and Plymouth colonies.
 - B. Building a faith.
- II. Building an independent spirit.
 - A. Beginning the American spirit.
 1. Developing personalities.
 2. Growing of nationalism.
 - B. Pitting common sense against Puritanism.
- III. Declaring independence.
 - A. What is an American?
 - B. The call to arms.
- IV. Coming of age as a nation.
 - A. Electing a president.
 - B. Writing a constitution.

Our basic text is *Adventures in American Literature*, third edition, by Inglis, Gehlman, Bowman, and Foerster. Upon this we built the framework of the unit. The following are a few supplementary sources: Commager, *Heritage of America*, Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales*, Boas and Burton, *Social Backgrounds of American Literature*, *The Federalist*, and various histories and classroom anthologies.

The one-hour class period is divided between lecture and discussion and laboratory work. The faith of the Puritans, their sincerity, and their intolerance, offer food for many spirited discussions. Hawthorne's "The Maypole of Merrymount" and "The Gentle Boy" present more realistically than all the histories the narrowness of their lives and thought. *Social Backgrounds* seems almost indispensable as a backdrop for these God-fearing colonists. Commager's *Heritage* provides invaluable source material for both Puritan and Cavalier writing. The discussion of the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian concepts of a national government led us into a most interesting forum on our present-day government. Is it a strong central government or is it states' rights? It may be interesting to note that the majority opinion was that it is growing more and more Hamiltonian.

The silent reels from the University of Illinois, depicting incidents in the lives of Franklin, Washington, Jefferson, and others, though brief and inadequate, serve to vitalize discussions of these personalities.

In an attempt to crystallize the thinking of individual members, they write précis of the more important readings. In lieu of a test over the unit, each student writes a paper of 250 words or more on *The Colonist's Contribution to the American Spirit*.

Since our school offers American history in the fourth year, this unit in the third year proves an excellent background for their later study. By this time they have learned that it is impossible to divorce literature from history, which is one of the things that I want them to learn.

What evidence do I have that the class has developed some feeling for the "spirit"? Let me quote from one of the better papers on *The Colonist's Contribution*:

The hardships and sufferings of these people created something in them that has been maintained to this day in the true American. Call it courage, hardiness, determination; call it anything you like. Call it Americanism. It can be defined only as a spirit. A spirit that makes people individuals; a spirit that makes them fight for what they believe in. It was evident in the Puritan; it is evident in us. There is a love of living and a love of life that is to be found nowhere else in the world.

What do we owe the colonists? We owe them our fierce sense of freedom and independence, our love of right and justice and fair play. . . . How can we pay this debt? We can remember them a little more intimately than as just a page in a history book. And most of all we can keep alive and pass on to each succeeding generation what they gave up their security and even their lives to attain. We can keep alive their pioneer spirit. I think this would be all they'd ask; they, our ancestors.

Americanism Through Short Stories

By RUTH GUSTAFSON
Virginia Community High School

In thinking about my methods of teaching Americanism, I find nothing startling. In fact, as I review my plan, I am impressed by its elementary character. However, here it is.

Before the students read a short story, they are given some information about the setting of the story and its important charac-

ter. We talk about the problems this person might have and how he might react to them.

After the students have read the story, we discuss the incidents, the people, their qualities of character. Can these experiences be found only in America? What qualities of character are typically American? What have these people received from America? What do they owe America? Name some qualities that you admire in a friend. Would America be a good country if everyone were like you? Who is an ideal citizen of our town?

We often read aloud descriptive passages to gain a further appreciation and understanding of people and places.

This year we presented a panel discussion before the student body to secure aid for the Philippine schools. In small measure, this may help to foster the American ideal of generosity.

In the tenth year composition work we are trying to write simple, complex, and compound sentences. To do this we write short paragraphs. Some of the material comes from our literature text which covers various phases of American life such as sports, beauty of nature, tolerance, neighborliness, etc.

We also make posters on good citizenship in school, at home, and at social affairs.

Human Problems: A Unit in Literature

By THEO DAY
Paris High School

In classes composed of students from every corner of town, with every type of background, the English teacher of today has a genuine problem in determining what to teach and how. The average teacher springs from an average middle-class heritage and is imbued with basic idealistic beliefs. It is difficult to visualize backgrounds which are not like that of your own or of your associates who are usually also teachers.

Today, making it even more confusing is the pull of opinion in opposing directions. We hear from parents, townspeople, and old-timers that education isn't worth much today. Spelling, grammar, and the classics are dreadfully neglected, and this neglect certainly is evident when the typical high school graduate enters the business world.

On the other hand, we are bombarded with the words of educators who are saying, "Remember, you are training only a minority for college or professional careers. Give something tangible, useful, to the majority."

To the first criticism I feel an urge to cry, "But how educated would those very same people have been had they lived one hundred or even fifty years ago? How many would have been able to read or write at all? You cannot fight lack of innate ability."

To the second criticism I should reply, "How can we know what they need? Their needs are so varied, almost more varied than their abilities. And how, if we knew, could we give between twenty and thirty different courses of study at once?"

Such has been the enigma confronting us. Such has been my dilemma.

As this school year has progressed, I have experimented wildly in a search for some fairly satisfactory course of action. Presented a text book of ancient vintage and no course of study whatever, I found myself limited on one hand in materials, and unlimited on the other, in selection and presentation.

Out of this chaotic state has grown this unit which I entitle "Human Problems." I am afraid that I cannot call it completely original for I have been delving into every source barrel available for ideas. But then, what creations are entirely original?

My objective, in case I haven't made that clear, was to offer something of use to as many of my pupils as possible without forgetting the few who may hope to continue their education on the college level. This "something" was to come from selections in literature: novels both classic and modern.

Because our community is a very average American farming area, I tried to select problems which would be typical of this area. These basic problems were finally ferreted out of my thinking: (1) rural-urban differences, (2) differences in generations, (3) problems in the family, (4) belonging to groups.

Underlying this, of course, were such aims as (1) affording opportunities for self-analysis, (2) encouraging original thinking and planning rather than the usual osmosis process of absorbing teacher-made ideas, (3) offering materials at a varied level of difficulty without attaching a stigma to those "easier" books, (4) giving much opportunity for written as well as oral expression of ideas, (5) making reading purposive as well as appreciative, and (6) offering a variety of projects to include those individuals whose interests might run along unexpected lines in other fields.

My first task was selecting my bibliography. With the help of a very willing and able librarian and several annotated bibliographies in the library, I was able to secure about fifty book titles which would be available to the students. This selecting was difficult since I wanted fairly up-to-date books, but books which

would illustrate one or more of the problem situations which we were considering.

I chose *Silas Marner* for our common experience reading. This choice was not only in answer to the classicists, but was, I thought, a good example of a story depicting the way a man met various problems.

My entire purpose would have been defeated had I expected meticulous reading of *Silas Marner* by every member of the class. Therefore, I proceeded carefully, narrating as much of the tale as possible by one means or another. Sometimes I would read orally, interpolating as I went along; at other times I would have some of my better students recount their latest readings. Once in a while I would insert a grammar lesson by having everyone develop sentences which would trace, step by step, plot developments. Examples of these sentences would be placed on the board, and in a final version the best would be chosen to make up a paragraph representing the combined efforts of the students. More than anything, I wanted to give them a common basis for later discussion, a springboard for our unit.

But, besides being good for its story, *Silas Marner* is good for background, good for style, and good for ideals. I found it difficult to avoid becoming eloquent with sermons on its merits. I knew, however, that in some way my better students should be helped to an increased appreciation of the book. Since they were able students, I chose the panel as the most expedient method. Thus were they afforded an opportunity to work out, with the guidance of my previously planned questions, illustrative materials to answer those questions. Their discussions following their preparation revealed a merging of ideas gleaned from personal experience with those from the pages of *Silas Marner*. Their reports were on a level more easily grasped by less able students than teacher-presented material would have been.

Other students were put on the trail of illustrative material from magazines to fit passages in the novel. This encouraged awareness of character-traits and of appearances as well as their knowing about the English setting. Each selection was mounted on colored paper and labeled with a quotation from the passage for which it was selected.

Still others were asked to try imagining themselves as being some unimportant citizen of Raveloe with enough of an education to be able to write a diary or a series of letters highlighting events as they occurred.

When *Silas Marner* had become enough a part of common understanding to serve as a basis for further reading and discus-

sion, we launched into a comparison of the modern American novels which had been read in the meantime. Here we attempted to point out similarities and differences in the ways people met problems in their novels. Again panels were used as the basic method.

My biggest job was to offer guidance in selection of novels and in planning the panels, and to determine the success of the unit. If we touched on any of their personal problems, not so much offering a solution as helping them realize that they were not alone in having these problems, then perhaps we had some success.

If I served some of my students with a purpose in finding out more about the setting or the environment in order to trace its effects on people, then perhaps we had more success.

Finally, if it kept me aware of the fact that everyone in my class deserved consideration in my teaching plans, then perhaps we had great success.

Improving Our Reading of Newspapers

By GEORGINE B. McDONALD

Arcola-Hindsboro Community Unit High School

It is with trepidation that I submit this article, for at the time I volunteered, I had not attended the battle of the Normandie Lounge at the National Council. After listening—as well as I could—to the symposium there, I fear my efforts are feeble indeed.

I have worked out the following program during the past five years, and I feel that it has been successful with all classes except the one which has just finished the project.

In English Four, second semester, I devote a period of time, two to four weeks, depending on number of students in the class, length of period, etc., to the study of newspapers. The first day or two I ask each person to bring a paper and read it thoroughly. Then I ask him to list all the departments he finds in the paper.

With the aid of Edgar Dale's book, *How to Read a Newspaper*, we talk about general matters. Then I hand out the accompanying outline with directions for filling in information for the papers which are available in the community and to the students. We compare appearances, policies, features, criticisms, and values.

Weekly papers are quite important in our community, and the students take much interest in comparing these papers, for they are able to use their own knowledge in evaluating the treatment of local news.

Some students, for the first time, read something in the papers beside the comics and the sports pages. They begin to realize that

readers should have a critical attitude toward what they read. And if this realization has been attained by most of the class, I feel the time has been well spent.

Outline for Evaluating Newspapers

1. Name of newspaper.
2. Type—city, town, small town, weekly, morning or evening, or Sunday editions.
3. Owners, publishers.
4. Circulation, price by day, week, or year, newsstand, carrier or mail service.
5. Politics—editorial policies.
6. Chain—reputation of chain.
7. Size—size of page and number of pages—tabloid or regular.
8. Front page makeup—general appearance.
9. General contents—departments, subdivisions in each—in inches.
10. Emphasis on what type of news—international, national, local, sensational, conservative.
11. Arrangement of paper.
12. Columns—reputations.
13. Comics—reputations.
14. Features—color, rotogravure Sunday supplements: books, travel, entertainment; own Sunday supplements or syndicate.
15. Advertising—types, commodities, costs if discoverable.
16. Specialties of the newspaper.
17. Criticisms.
18. Appeal to what type of reader.
19. How well it performs the special functions of its type.
20. General value of the paper.

Papers Available:

Chicago Daily Tribune, Chicago Daily News, Chicago Herald-American, Chicago Sun-Times, Champaign-Urbana News Gazette, Decatur Herald and Review, Urbana Courier, Mattoon Journal Gazette, Charleston Daily News, Courier, Arcola Record-Herald, Tuscola Review, Tuscola Journal, Hindsboro News.

Other Topics for Discussion:

Censorship, circulation contests, special events sponsored by the paper, use of special correspondents, use of news services, comparison of usually read papers with as many others as possible including foreign papers, New York, West Coast, and any other that can be obtained.

Magazine articles, etc. for individual use.

A Unit in Community English

By ADDIE HOCHSTRASSER
Paris High School

Through my office as secretary of the Paris High School Parent-Teacher Association, I learned that Parent-Teacher programs are judged in part by the amount of student participation which is included. When the local Parent-Teacher Association launched a drive to curtail the sale of comic books in Paris, my students and I planned a unit of work which would include an evaluation of comic books and which could be given at a P.T.A. program.

The study of comic books provided actual practice in interviewing—newsstands for statistics; lawyers for legal aspects; ministers, students, and teachers for opinions. Current newspapers and magazines were brought in to give us the opinions of various outside authorities. The Town Meeting of the Air program on the subject was discussed.

The oral work began with short speeches in our English classes. Following the class speeches, the students selected two representatives from each group to appear for a roundtable discussion before the High School Parent-Teacher Association. This program brought an invitation to repeat the program before the Junior High School Parent-Teacher Association. Later the Kiwanis Club of Paris invited the roundtable group to present their discussion at the Hotel France as the program for one of their dinner meetings. The group next traveled to Tuscola, Illinois, where they gave the program over the air from Radio Station WDW. Following the radio broadcast, the students were invited by telephone to repeat their talks at the Tuscola High School. After this program Miss Thelma Grumble's English class entertained with a coke party. As final proof of the effectiveness of the comic book study, the comic books which had been used for class study were sold as waste paper, and the money was spent to buy a copy of Charles Lindbergh's *Of Flight and Life* for the classroom library.

The outline for our class study follows.

Comic Books—Pro and Con

I. Objectives.

- A. Define humor. What are the characteristics of humor?
- B. What chief devices used for achieving humor have we found in our study of literature—simile, metaphor, exaggeration, dialect?

- C. Examples of humor in English literature studied in the junior year.
- D. Examples of humor in American literature studied during the senior year.
- E. An analysis of comic book humor.

II. Class Procedures.

- A. List the devices for securing humor; define and illustrate each. (Simile, metaphor, exaggeration, pun, dialect, irony, satire, parody, mispronounced words, insult, understatement, situation, action, old fashions, settings and people).
- B. Enjoy humor in English literature. (Addison, Steele, Pope, Swift, Burns, Shakespeare).
- C. Enjoy examples of humor in American literature. (Irving, Tarkington, Mark Twain, Holmes, Lowell).
- D. Share humorous findings by each student, presenting an analysis of the humor found in one selection chosen from literature.
- E. Present an analysis of humor found in one comic book.
- F. Point out differences and similarities, advantages and disadvantages among comic books. (Artistry, subtlety, good ideas, high standards).
- G. Write an argumentative article.
 - Why I Favor Comic Books.
 - Why I Am Opposed to Comic Books.
- H. Participate in roundtable discussions of such topics as the following:
 - 1. Comic books are not funny; instead they are sensational and over-stimulating.
 - 2. Comic books are a waste of time and money.
 - 3. Comic books are easy, eye appealing, and interesting. If they are properly presented, they should lead to an interest in reading good books.
 - 4. Not all comic books are undesirable.
 - 5. Some comic books promote crime—they give readers bad ideas (race hatred, bad speech, overdrawn sex interests, unnatural situations).
 - 6. Comic books should be improved but not destroyed.
 - 7. Comic books represent a form of attractive art.
 - 8. Buy a child a good book instead of a comic book.
 - 9. Can comic books be legally banned?
 - 10. Comic books reflect social conditions.
 - 11. Why do people read comics?
 - 12. What do authorities say about comics?

Reading for Profit and Pleasure

By VELMA O. NAVE

Frankfort Community High School, West Frankfort

The development of good character in children is an essential factor in promoting their happiness, in fostering good citizenship, in promulgating and insuring a democratic society for future America.

Personal progress necessitates a well defined *purpose* for a child's life, a thorough knowledge of the ways and means of promoting this purpose, and courage, inspired by confidence in himself, together with a knowledge of his personal weaknesses. These are factors in child guidance of which a teacher of literature must be fully aware if she hopes to teach youth to hold fast to their visions and to accomplish worthwhile tasks.

Child guidance can best be accomplished through a wisely directed reading program. I initiated this reading unit in many junior literature classes by bringing to class pamphlets from our high school library on "careers": teaching, politics, stenography, agriculture, architecture, designing, mechanical drawing, sports, music, etc. Each student read his favorite pamphlet; then, he listed the personal qualifications required for his career and the names and addresses of schools which offer training in the career of his choice. The following day, talks were given on these subjects. The next day each wrote a business letter to the career school of his choice.

I initiated the major part of the unit by writing on the board the quotation from Longfellow's "Psalm of Life":

"Lives of great men oft' remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sand of time."

This quotation raised the question: Who are the great? A list of names of "great" men and women were written on the blackboard. A discussion of the merits of each person followed. Logically, we concluded that what a person thinks, believes, and does makes him live on in our minds because we appreciate what he has done for us and our generation. But, we decided that a really great man possesses admirable traits of character, such as ambition, willingness to work, courage, thriftiness, temperance, cleanliness, cooperativeness, sympathy, tolerance, charitableness, faith, patriotism,

and humility. Some of these traits we assigned to great historical characters familiar to us.

Furthermore, we decided that these men would mean nothing to us if we had not met them in our literature, history, science, music, and art courses. A committee was appointed to investigate our newly-revised library, and to list biographies and autobiographies available for our use. With guidance, this list was compiled, and typed copies were distributed to each student for reference in "spying footprints of the great" in our library. Under the guidance of the librarian and me, nearly every student spied his library book during the one class period we were in the library.

Since considerable time is required for the reading of biography, the librarian allowed students to use the books three weeks. I permitted them one week of the regular class time for reading. The first day in class each student was instructed to read carefully the preface of his book, to formulate in his own mind, or to ask me, the chief value he might expect to get from reading this book. The next four reading days in class the students read, taking brief notes on each chapter as they finished it. Then, the remaining chapters were counted and daily reading was planned so that each student could finish his book on or before the time it was to be due.

"Do we have to report on these books?" was the daily question until all reading was completed. My answer was always, "No." Instead, they were told to write a miniature book comment consisting of title, author, list of chief accomplishments of main character, desirable and undesirable traits exemplified by character, and finally, the chief value each reader received from this book which would help him in choosing or following his career or in improving his personality.

These comments were written in the form of a personal essay. After I checked them, I had students list brief book comments on cards for our reading file. In addition, a committee cut miniature booklets of cardinal and gray, our school colors, required students to write the title and author of the books read, and pasted these booklets beside the names of each student to denote the books he read.

This unit provided good opportunity for correlation of English and other subjects through reading about outstanding personages from each field. The guidance I gave in this unit enabled me to understand my students much more thoroughly. They, too, seemed to enjoy our conferences and the books they read. For example, a timid, discouraged girl, who plans to become a nurse, profited by reading the life of Madame Curie. A boy who wished

to become a missionary deeply appreciated the indomitable courage of David Livingston.

After they finished their books, I heard this encouraging comment: "It's fun to read for profit. Some books are too easy and the characters in them are silly; it's a waste of time for *juniors* to read books that are too easy."

They had learned to read character for profit and for pleasure.

Procedure for a Work Unit: Pride in Work Well Done

By HELEN PASCHALL AND RUBY MANN
Jacksonville High School

On Monday, the first day of second semester, announcement was made that we were going to consider various aspects of work for a few weeks with emphasis upon good workmanship, rewards of work, respect for various kinds of work, and considerations entering into the choice of a life work.

The current issue of *Reader's Digest*, in the hands of each student, furnished material for the first assignment. Each individual was asked to make a parallel outline in which to enter data concerning seven characters who were the subjects of character studies in the magazine. The form of the outline was explained and demonstrated on the board. Comment was made concerning the value of such an outline in making a comparative study of characters. Five headings were given under which data were to be entered so far as possible for each character: Ancestry and Early Environment; Interests and Education; Personal Characteristics; Difficulties or Handicaps; Achievements.

An appeal was made for pride in workmanship in making the outline from the standpoint of appearance (inclusive of straight lines, even spacing, legibility, and accuracy), and especially from the standpoints of thoroughness of data and thoughtfulness of entries.

Members of the class read articles and worked at outlines for the remainder of this period and for the two following days. Individual questions were answered as they arose. On the second day, a small portion of the period was used to present some study questions to be kept in mind while continuing with the outlines. The questions were: (1) What part has hard work (physical or mental) had in the lives of these characters? (2) What attitudes have you found toward work in relationship to pay or in relation-

ship to other rewards? (3) Which of the characters, according to your measure of success, have been most successful? Why? (4) What qualities of personality and character, possessed by these characters, do you consider most worthwhile? (5) To what extent are achievements resultant of family background, early environment and interests, character traits, and difficulties?

On the fourth day, outlines were complete. The class was divided into five groups. Each individual in Group One was asked to write a thoughtful answer to question one, and so on with the other questions and groups.

Next, each group was asked to gather as a committee with one of the number appointed as chairman by the teacher. It was explained that each committee had two main functions to accomplish as efficiently as possible in a limited time: (1) to select a speaker to represent the group in a panel to be held the next day for discussion of the assigned thought questions, (2) to judge and rate outlines of group members according to criteria already mentioned.

Thoughts written by each group member on the assigned question were to be handed to the chosen speaker with the understanding that he was to organize them and make any use he could of them along with his own ideas. Thus, each speaker received cooperation from other members of his group.

Committee chairmen were asked to hand to the teacher the names of speakers for the following day, and the outlines with their ratings as determined by the group.

On the succeeding day, panel discussions filled the period. They led toward evidences of the relationship between hard work and achievement, the importance of zeal and integrity in work, observations of the early settings of the sails as determining careers, and service and creativeness as more important rewards than the pay check. The fact that all members of the class had worked at outlines and contributed ideas to their representative speakers encouraged them to participate well as listeners, questioners, and donors of supplementary ideas.

At the beginning of the second week, classes began reading sixty-eight pages of the book, *America Speaking*, in a section titled "Pride in Work." Enough of these books were available for each student to use one during the reading period. Direction was given that the assigned reading would be climaxed by general discussion and by individually written answers to thought questions. These questions were put on the board for study in correlation with the reading. They were designed to bring to attention the

many types of workers and their classifications as craftsmen, vocational, menial, professional, executive, and so on. Questions also led readers to continue observations of rewards, sources of pride, importance of team-work, and various other factors.

On Tuesday of the second week, detailed instructions were given for the making of a booklet by each member of the class to be handed in at the end of three weeks. It was to contain ideas about work gleaned from many sources. The emphasis was upon gathering materials really liked by the student and making a book containing a philosophy of work that might be worth keeping. There were certain requirements, such as title-page, table of contents, and some type of index, as one purpose of the booklet was to make students better acquainted with the parts of a book and cause them to examine many books. Other suggestions were the making of a list of the rewards of work; a list of characteristics of good workmen; a collection of work poems (understood and enjoyed); slogans; quotations; meaningful cartoons; work songs; original drawings; an artistic cover; original writing, such as poems, essays, and biographies of successful and admirable workers known by the student; brief well-worded reviews of short stories, biographies, and career books that contributed ideas on work.

On the third day of the second week, the entire class went to the school library. Instructions were given as to how to find materials, and the remainder of the period was spent reading and copying chosen selections. It should be said here that all were urged to choose only selections which seemed meaningful and appealing to them.

On the fourth day, committees again met and arranged for group discussions, on the next day, of the following assigned topics: Rewards of Work; Good Work Habits (emphasis upon study); How to Overcome Distaste for Work; and Factors to Consider in Choosing a Life Work.

On Friday, each group chairman announced the plan of procedure decided upon by members, followed by group discussion of the allotted topic. Members of the class were urged to participate.

Monday of the third week was left open for working at booklets and reading. The teacher's own collection of books and magazines placed in the classroom furnished a fair amount of material. An advance reading assignment was made in the regular text book, *American Prose and Poetry*; "The Dry Drive" by Andy Adams; "Scenes on the Mississippi" by Samuel Clemens; and "Wheat and the Harvest" by Hamlin Garland.

On Tuesday, again, most of the period was devoted to study

according to individual need. Attention was called to Crabbe's *Book of Synonyms* as an interesting source of information concerning the distinctions between *work*, *labor*, *toil*, *drudgery*, and *task*. Other related families of words were discussed such as: *servant*, *menial*, *domestic*, and *drudge*, also, *active*, *diligent*, *assiduous*, *industrious*, and *laborious*.

On Wednesday, the teacher gave a brief check test on textbook reading, followed by general discussion. Additional ideas about work were allowed to be incidental to other qualities of the assigned readings. Nevertheless, discussion of the realistic presentation of cowboy life, needs for resourcefulness in emergencies, teacher-pupil relationship in the river-boat experiences, and the variety and charm along with toil and heavy responsibility of farm work added breadth to our conceptions of the world of work. We also found an excellent example of the greater joy resulting from vacation or rest if it has been preceded by arduous work, either physical or mental.

One more reading assignment completed advance work for the week, "The Making of a Naturalist" by Donald Peattie. This, too, was in the regular text. It was discussed on Thursday with emphasis upon influences of early environment combined with natural inclinations and certain chance combinations of circumstances upon the choice of a life work.

Friday was open for inspection of progress of booklets, related reading, and writing. An advance text book assignment was made, "Early Life and Self-education" by Benjamin Franklin.

On the day the booklets were due, each class once more divided into groups for the purpose of examining the booklets and selecting one or two from each group for honorable mention on the basis of these previously established goals: worthwhile content, originality, neat and accurate workmanship. Each group then prepared a program for the class, sharing the best things found in the books in the group.

SPRING EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

All members are invited to attend the spring board meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. May 7, in the Penthouse of the Hotel Chicagoan in Chicago. Write to Mrs. Zada Templeton, 421 S. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park, if you plan to attend the meeting and wish luncheon reservations.

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